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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 000182

DEPT FOR EAP, EAP/MTS, EAP/MLS, PRM FOR HTRAN; NSC FOR EPHU

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [ID](#) [BM](#) [PK](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: ROHINGYA BOAT PEOPLE HOSTED BY ACEHNESE COMMUNITY

REF: JAKARTA 176 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Pol/C Joseph L. Novak, reasons 1.4(b+d).

11. (U) This message was coordinated with Consulate Medan and Consulate General Surabaya.

12. (C) SUMMARY: The 198 Rohingyas that landed in northern Aceh on February 2 are being well cared for by members of the Acehese community. The local government has asked the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to assist, but the Department of Foreign Affairs (Deplu) has so far not given the go ahead.

13. (C) SUMMARY (Con'd): Meanwhile, IOM and Deplu have concluded interviews of the first boatload of 173 Rohingyas and 20 Bangladeshis who landed on Sabang Island, Aceh, on January 7. While noting that it is positive that the migrants are being taken care of, we have reiterated to the GOI that the UNHCR should be granted access. In a separate migration incident, police in Southeast Sulawesi Province detained approximately 40 Afghan and Pakistani migrants and four Indonesian smugglers. END SUMMARY.

ASSISTANCE FROM LOCAL COMMUNITY

14. (SBU) The second boatload of 198 Rohingyas to drift into Indonesian waters in the past month was being treated hospitably by local residents in the rural Sub-district of Idie in East Aceh District. They are staying in tents at the sub-district chief's office complex, treated at a local hospital, and fed by local social services and Indonesian Red Cross (PMI). Idie officials told ConGen Medan FSN. Although the area is not a rich one, some of the Rohingyas were housed, clothed and fed in people's homes as well.

IOM EFFORTS

15. (C) GOI authorities have begun interviewing the group, but are hampered by not having a Rohingya interpreter. Authorities are talking to the one Rohingya who can speak Malay. Deplu, which had invited IOM to assist with the first boatload of Rohingyas in Sabang and is using an IOM Rohingya interpreter at that location, has declined IOM assistance for this second group. The offer to dispatch the interpreter from Sabang to Idie was also turned down. DepPol/C reiterated on February 4 to Deplu officials the need to provide UNHCR access to all the migrants and the desire of the international community to help.

16. (C) IOM Country Director Steve Cook told DepPol/C that the Idie Sub-district chief had asked for IOM assistance to care for the refugees. Deplu had said IOM could provide assistance only through the PMI, which Cook said IOM might be willing to do, although IOM has no funds at this time. Jesuit Relief Services (JRS) and the International Federation of the Red Cross both told Cook that they have warehouses full of food and supplies that they can provide if requested by the GOI. However, JRS is only able to provide services directly and could not work through the PMI.

¶17. (C) The USD 10,000 provided by Australian immigration for the Sabang migrants has enabled IOM to provide good care over the past several days, alleviating a severe shortage of food and supplies, Cook told DepPol/C. The USD 15,000 IOM requested from PRM will be needed by approximately February 13 in order to continue meeting emergency needs through February.

¶18. (SBU) Local sources told ConGen Medan FSN that the Rohingya boat in Idie apparently had been pushed off from Thailand 21 days before arriving in Aceh. Indonesian fishermen towed the 40-foot flat-bottomed boat to shore at 2 a.m. on February 2. The group had been at sea for seven days without food and about 22 had died. The youngest on board was 13 years old.

¶19. (C) IOM and Deplu interviews of the 193 boat people on Sabang Island concluded on February 3, Cook confirmed. The GOI has asked IOM to prepare a presentation with IOM conclusions as well as transcripts of the interviews. Deplu will determine its next steps based on the assessment. Deplu has not said what its next steps will be, but deportation appears unlikely (reftel).

A SEPARATE CASE IN SULAWESI

¶10. (SBU) In a separate migration incident, police in Southeast Sulawesi Province detained approximately 40 Afghan and Pakistani migrants and four Indonesian smugglers. The migrants were en route to Australia. In 2008, Indonesian police interdicted about 200 persons from South Asia being smuggled to Australia, and many more made it through to Australia, according to Australian immigration sources in Jakarta. The GOI cooperates closely with Australian immigration authorities in this effort and the GOA funds IOM to assist with care and repatriation of migrants who are interdicted. The GOI in the past year has ramped up interdiction of migrants being smuggled or trafficked transiting Indonesia.

HUME